

## Through an Outsider's Eyes

*"I want to leave a lasting impression on the world, and god damn it do not blame anyone else besides me and V for this "*

Eric Harris.

Years after the bullet holes were patched, the smoke stains washed off the walls, the library cleaned and covered, and the students returned, one question remains. Why? How could two teenage boys be responsible for the deaths of 13 fellow classmates, the injury of 23 others, and their own suicides? How did these kids become so much different from "normal" kids? Turns out they're not so much different, at least from kids like me.

I was born in Boise, Idaho, into a family of drug addicts. When I was one, my family and I moved to Oregon, and when I was seven, my parents got clean. My mom is a full time student who graduates this spring from OSU, and my father is a contractor.

Eric Harris, on the other hand, was born into a military family. His father, Wayne Harris, was a transport pilot for the Air Force. The Harris family moved around frequently from Air Force Base in Ohio, to Michigan, to upstate New York. While living in New York, Eric played little league. His coach, Terry Condo, thought of him fondly, " He was just a quiet boy trying to fit in."

Dylan Klebold's family was just as normal. His father, Tom Klebold, is a retired geophysicist, who now looks over rental apartments in downtown Denver. Dylan's mother, Sue, works to improve learning access for the disabled at the community college.

When I was younger, other kids made fun of me. My parents were the cause. Most of the people in my school knew about my parents' problem and because of this problem their kids were not allowed to hang out with my sisters and me. After my parents got clean, we moved to a new town and there for a while people liked me. I think some kids are targeted in life to be made fun of. I was one of them. By eighth grade, the teasing had gotten out of control. I spent a lot of my time hiding in the bathroom to stay away from the other girls. As the year went on, the school shortened my schedule as if to convince me to- at least-- come to school at all. Teenage girls can be so mean when they are forced to make fun of or be made fun of. It is still so clear: I can hear their words, "Bitch" one girl yelled as I walked down the hall with my head bowed, heading straight for safety, the seventh grade bathroom.

When ninth grade rolled around, I had a new safety net, marijuana. I got high before school, during our first break, lunch time, our second break, and before I went home. This year as they yelled names at me, I would glare at them with my middle finger stuck straight up as I ditched class to refresh my high. Half way through the year, the teachers decided that they didn't want to keep giving me chances. They too gave up on me like I had given up on myself years before, and kicked me out of school.

As for Eric and Dylan, in Colorado both of the boys were exceptional students,

who together played fantasy baseball, worked at the same pizza place, had a love for Shakespeare, and were obsessed with the violent video game Doom. Although the boys seemed to have a good life, a happy life, they were truly disturbed inside. A few years back the boys joined a group called the "Trench Coat Mafia." The group was given this name by the jocks that made fun of them for wearing long dark coats. A member of the Trench Coat Mafia told the Denver Post that, "life for a member of my group was pure hell. I can't describe how hard it was to wake up in the morning and face that." Friends of Eric and Dylan say they joined the group as an attempt to fit in with someone. Junior Makala Scrodin remembers, "they'd walk with their heads down, because if they looked up they'd get thrown into the lockers and get called 'fag'." "Eric and Dylan took the brunt of a lot of people's aggression," friend Brooks Brown remembers. A psychologist that studied this schoolyard bullying reported that "85% of students are not the abusers or the abused, but they are aware of the abuse that goes on." Even though the boys were teased by only a small percentage of people I believe that is what caused them to hate their school and the people in it. Close friend Brooks also says, "what they did wasn't about anger or hate. It was about them living in the moment like they were inside a video game. Then they can't get out of the library, and they have a moment of overwhelming remorse. Or maybe one does while the other is still lost inside the game."

To me our lives seem similar in so many ways, with the abuse we suffered in school and the way we felt in side, yet there are a few differences. For example, I didn't kill or injure 46 people. And still I ask, what makes "them" different? I believe with Eric the abuse started in childhood. With his family moving so much, I feel he never had time to form real relationships with real kids. Harris recalls he always had to start over "at the bottom of the ladder." He also said that people constantly made fun of "my face, my hair, my shirts." Klebold liked to blame his problems on his extended family, his brother and brother's friends." If you could see all the anger I've stored over the past four fucking years." He goes on to say, "You made me what I am. You added to the rage." I on the other hand was very loved by my family even as my mom and dad got high or when they split up] was still cared for. Second, both boys were dangerously obsessed with the violent video game *Doom* in which players rack up points by killing people. I think that an influence like that can leave lasting and even dangerous impressions on easily influenced kids. I was never exposed to violence. Or maybe I just knew better than to involve myself in that type of violence. Last I think as a way to cope the boys planned their revenge. At first I think it helped them get past the pain but as time went on, I think they got more into it and became more serious. Brook's Brown has his opinion, which] can agree with. "Did they snap? I think they snapped a bunch of times," he says. "Every time someone slammed them against a locker and threw a bottle at them, I think they'd go back to Eric or Dylan's house and plot a little more--at first as a goof but more and more seriously over time. It's a theory, but it makes sense to everyone who knew them." So could this have been a bad case of follow the leader? How could two normal boys just get mixed up in a video game? Could years of torment cause them to hurt so many?

Everyone seems to think these two boys were monsters. How could anyone kill and laugh at the same time? I feel bad for Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold. I believe they showed only a small fraction of what they were going through. I understand how they

feel. There was always something wrong with me to everyone else. Unlike Eric and Dylan, I gave up on myself after] got kicked out of school halfway through my freshman year. I can't tell you how many times I have thought of revenge. Not just on the people that made fun of me, but also the teachers that watched me run down the halls crying. It has been four years since I left school and I still glare as I drive past West Albany. Even if I could go back, I wouldn't, I believe high school does more harm than good. The hardest thing for me to accept in the Columbine case is the fact that nobody will ever know why they did this because the only two that did also took their lives that day. I think they wanted it to be that way. If this would have been an open and shut case, they would have been forgotten to some degree. With "why" not being answered, some will search for the rest of their lives to always fall short. The boys are finally known across the world. They finally found a way to fit in. Death. I have a great deal of empathy for Eric and Dylan. They took so much from so many. I am sad for them and everyone affected, but I am angry for those who pushed these two boys to find their only way out, murder. May god rest their hurt souls. May god rest all the souls hurt in this truly preventable tradgy. tragedy.